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Introduction: The politics of a technological project

One of the major themes during the 2011 national election campaign in Denmark was a curious object – the so-called payment ring, conceived to curb congestion in Copenhagen. It is tempting to introduce this imagined infrastructure through a linear narrative with a 'before' and an 'after' the elections. By the time of the elections in September 2011, the plan to build a road toll infrastructure in the Danish capital had already been part of an S-SF party alliance platform for a couple of years. The plan did not spark much discussion, however, before the election campaign, where S-SF's main political antagonists (let's just call them V) started arguing that the payment ring was a controversial project. Nevertheless, S-SF was elected into office as part of a coalition government, which arguably gave them an official mandate to move forward with the payment ring. At least the project was made part of the action programme of the new government. The controversy, however, was left unsettled, and in February 2012, the prime minister discontinued the project, arguing that 'broad parts of the population' seemed to be against it (Vester 2012).

The fact that it is tempting to tell the story of the payment ring in a linear fashion - 'before', 'during' and 'after' the 2011 elections - indicates how various practices have made such a storyline possible. Before the elections, the payment ring was presented as a tiny, technical part of a complicated political platform. Then the plans were exploited in the election campaign material of opposing political parties. Finally, after the elections, what was now a widely advertised as an 'election promise' came to a grinding halt after six months of supposedly humiliating controversy for the newly elected government. This linear narrative is a tragic story in the sense that all the main actors seem to have harmed themselves in the process. The new government came out of it seeming weak – as politicians not able to follow through with what they had argued for. The democratic institutions also seemed to have failed in so far as the public elicited by the election was overruled by more obscure processes. Even the political antagonists of S-SF came out in bad shape in so far as they controversialized the payment ring plans for strategic purposes, despite the fact that they had supported the idea of a payment ring only a few years earlier. These three examples of harmed reputations is without mentioning the consequences for the city of Copenhagen itself, which is now stuck without any measures for reduced congestion in sight, although neighbouring capitals like Oslo, Stockholm and London all have such measures in place.

Witnessing this sad tale, even when told in a rash and exaggerated fashion, it is hard not to think that we should have known better. As Latour (1996) argues, technological innovations per definition involve the appearance of new actors, which means that an on-going work of compromise is necessary. The main political parties in Denmark, however, seem to have worked hard *not* to compromise, bringing new actors onto the stage in a way that simplified and reinforced antagonisms. If this is what delegative democracy does to technological projects, Callon et al's (2011) recommendations for a more dialogical alternative seems timely. What the notion of dialogical democracy in hybrid forums offers, to paraphrase Callon et al., is a less linear and more spatial conceptualization of political processes. In such a conceptualization, the storyline where a payment ring object is first deployed and then 'taken up' in public debate is less persuasive. Rather, objects (and their 'experts') would be deployed in the same space as publics (and their 'delegates'), allowing "possible worlds to proliferate" instead of restricting the process to a struggle over what *the* 'payment ring world' would be like (Callon et al. 2011:241). The promise of such as hybrid space, according to Callon and colleagues, is that the "the arrangements necessary for the construction of a common world become easier" (ibid.).

As Callon et al. (2011:189) note, a general metaphor of a hybrid 'space' also has its limits. What STS research, and in particular actor-network theory, has tried to do more specifically is to disturb an Euclidean conceptualization of space by deploying a more topological conception, where a multiplicity of situated space-times takes precedence (Marres 2012b). Marres makes the interesting suggestion that digital technologies might be of particular interest in this regard, in so far as they afford more networked imaginaries that challenge strong distinctions between social and technological change, where the latter tends to take primacy over the former in a linear fashion. As such, studying how a controversy unfolds on digital media such as social network sites might be an occasion to examine a proliferation of possible worlds in practice, however imperfect in comparison with the model proposed by Callon and colleagues. In the payment ring case, several Facebook pages were founded in relation to the controversy, a practice that has become relatively commonplace with the widespread uptake of Facebook use in Denmark. The question I raise in this paper is what

kind of alternative controversy spaces were opened by this use of Facebook. I turn now to an initial description of the Facebook pages in order to motivate this question a bit further.

Facebook as a hybrid forum?

Given the way Facebook pages work, there seem to be several ways in which they disturb a linear narrative of political and technological change, and some ways in which they might resemble hybrid forums. For one thing, any Facebook user can launch a new page and try to attract other users to like it. Facebook pages thus redistributes calculative power in so far as they make devices of publication and aggregation available in a way that conventional election infrastructures do not. At the same time, Facebook allows its users to be members of as many pages as they want, which disrupts the 'one citizen one vote' mechanism that is arguably key to the way elections elicit publics. This might have to do with the fact that Facebook pages are not really designed for politics in a conventional sense, but rather as mechanisms through which brands and artists can promote themselves. In a sense, then, pages work as digital badges that users can wear in order to showcase loyalty to a product or a person. This dynamic is underpinned by the mechanism that when a user is active on a page, this activity is often disseminated to his/her social network.

Using Facebook pages in relation to a public controversy thus involves some degree of reappropriation of a functionality built for different purposes. When reappropriated in this way, Facebook pages seem to offer Facebook users the opportunity to visibly align themselves with a certain 'position' in a controversy. Let me illustrate how this works. Based on Facebook searches for the word 'betalingsring' - the original Danish word used in the controversy, of which 'payment ring' is a clumsy translation - I found 14 relevant pages. For each page, the founders/owners had provided short page descriptions that positioned the page in relation to the payment ring. Here are three examples:

> *"Citizens who do not want a payment wall around Copenhagen – independent of political parties"*

> *"For us, who still support a payment ring around Copenhagen"*

"We say no to S-SF's payment ring around Copenhagen. It will hit hard working people, who are dependent on their cars, with a drastic extra tax"

These self-descriptions all clarify whether the page is for or against the payment ring project. It is noteworthy that at the same time, the descriptions tell us who should be active on these pages. One page is for those who support a payment ring. Two other pages are for those against it. One of them specifies that it is for those against the *S-SF version* of a payment ring, while the other specifies that it is against the project in a way that is *independent* of party politics. One might say that the pages all demarcate the appropriate public explicitly. The two pages positioned in opposition to the payment ring also qualify the object itself in the page descriptions. The first one uses the metaphor of a *wall*. The second one elaborates that the main issue is the payment ring being in effect a heavy *new tax* on honest people that have no good alternative to using their car to go to work.

These first observations suggest that when founding a Facebook page, there is a question of how to demarcate the relevant public and the relevant object. Following Marres' (2005) pragmatist conceptualization of publics, this co-articulation is what is characteristic of *issues*. By deploying the payment ring as an issue in different ways, the Facebook pages, when taken together, seem to offer a plurality of answers to the question of how to understand the payment ring and its consequences. The question of what constitutes the appropriate public is kept open by this plurality. These properties make the pages a different venue for payment ring politics than the official process, in so far as institutionalized politics takes it for a given that the appropriate public is a general national public that is assumed to exist a priori to the issue. In comparison, Facebook seems to offer a more open-ended space where several possible worlds can be deployed side by side, at least when the Facebook pages are surveyed together through the list of search results. Following Callon et al.'s notion of hybrid forums, one of the possible advantages of this might be a chance to recognize payment ring-related 'minority identities' when they are still emergent, and thus debatable in a productive way. The notion of social network sites as spaces of 'debate', however, is controversial in itself, as I will briefly discuss now.

Facebook pages as echo chambers or issue publics?

The potential of Facebook and other digital media as hybrid spaces raises the question of how a space of controversy is being imagined more specifically with such devices. Here, Marres (2012b) makes a distinction between what she terms 'weak' and 'strong' topological perspectives. Such a distinction becomes crucial when the question is not so much how to *study* technoscientific controversies in more topological ways, but rather how to study digital devices that *come with* topological perspectives, such as Facebook and other 'social networks'. Marres' proposal is that digital technologies, more than other topological devices, allow for interrelatedness between technology and society. This is what is at stake in an analysis of Facebook pages as controversy spaces: To what extent are objects and publics articulated as interrelated, and what are the dynamics of topological representations more specifically?

These questions are critical in so far as it has become a controversial matter itself how "methods of 'topological' analysis have become built into digital technologies", as Marres (2012:299) puts it. What I am thinking about here is the relatively widespread characterization of social media spaces like those of Facebook pages as "echo chambers" or "information cocoons" (Hendricks and Hansen 2014; Pariser 2012; Sunstein 2006). This is the idea that the 'social web' is also the advent of the 'personalized web', which presents a risk that web users are no longer exposed to opinions different from their own, but rather lulled into thinking that their views are the only ones that exist, since they are fed only content that conforms with what they already think. Such echo chambers on social media are seen as detrimental to the unfolding of deliberative democracy.

In a sense, the echo chamber description/critique of social network sites goes along with a topological understanding in so far as what is seen as crucial is the unlimited unfolding of networks. At the same time, however, the notion of a 'chamber' suggests that an abstract public space is projected to exist 'around' the activities on social networks, which means that the standard of a general (national) public related to delegative democracy is maintained. Moreover, the notion of an 'echo' suggests a particular understanding of information as a resource that can be copied and transmitted without change in quality. Such a view of information might seem intuitive, not least in relation to the web where it indeed seems to be the case that any piece of information can be copied infinitely and sent anywhere in the world.

However, as Latour (2013:93) points out, such a view of information is ”demanding the impossible: a displacement *without transformations of any sort*”. Following Latour, any displacement of information comes at the cost of establishing a new relationship, which always involves some kind of mediation or translation of those involved. What is at stake in the ‘echo’ critique then is the patrolling of a dichotomy between nature (untouched by mediation) and culture (mediation) that is central to delegative democracy (Callon et al. 2011), and which could exactly be challenged in a more topological perspective allowed by digital media.

The notion of social network sites as echo chambers might thus be understood as a ‘weak’ topological conceptualization of such spaces in the sense that it insists on these given boundaries and frameworks. A stronger topological perspective on social network sites as controversy spaces might be found by pursuing the notion of issue publics, which allows issues and publics to come into existence together, as already noted (Marres 2005, 2007, 2012a). In this conceptualization, the word ’issue’ suggests that an object has been qualified as a matter of concern by someone. The word ’public’ describes these ’someones’ gathering around an issue. The results is a more object-oriented conception of the politics, with the consequence that there is no expectation of a singular public sphere of disentangled citizens, nor of a simple transmission or echoing of information about objects. Rather, the notion of issue publics points to processes of on-going inquiry into the consequences of objects. The demarcation of the relevant public changes accordingly, as these consequences are qualified as issues that implicate people in various ways. This is a pragmatist understanding of publics, in which there are no a priori fixed boundaries to publics (such as national ones). There are also no a priori fixed qualities to objects (such as being problematic or not). Rather, these questions are open and inherently problematic – they are the problem of the public, to paraphrase Dewey (1927).

Studying Facebook pages

The controversial status of social network sites as topological devices as expressed by the notion of echo chambers indicates what is at stake in the empirical question of how Facebook pages inflect public controversies. The emphasis on the topology of ‘debate’ or collective inquiry makes it necessary to go beyond the page titles and the page descriptions that were

discussed above, which raises the question of where to begin in the large stream of posts and comments that some of the pages exhibited. In an attempt to be consistent with the tension pointed to by the echo chamber critique, I chose to begin from the posts with the most liked comments. Focusing on where users had liked the comments of other users seemed to offer the strongest test as to whether there was some kind of recursive affirmation going on in the Facebook pages, or something else, perhaps more resembling collective inquiry in an issue public.

Of the 14 pages, only half exhibited substantial activity in the sense of containing comments and likes by users that could be examined further. Of these 7 pages, five were positioned against the payment ring, and two positioned as in favor of the project. In order to take a closer look, I used the Netvizz application developed by Rieder (2013) to download all the posts, comments and likes from the seven payment ring-related Facebook pages that proved to contain substantial activity. In following the strategy just mentioned, I ordered the posts according to the sum total number of likes that *their comments* had received, and selected the top three posts and their comments, as the most relevant starting points of the analysis.

On Facebook pages, comments are situated in interactions that might be captured and reappropriated as a sort of 'networked content analysis' (Rogers 2013) in the sense that a network of users are collectively selecting and qualifying streams of content. In fact, there seems to be three levels of networked content analysis in play on a Facebook page. On the first level, anyone can start a page being to select and qualify various pieces of 'content' as posts on the page. In the payment ring case, the posts that page owners chose to share were mostly links to news stories and other analyses found on the web. This stream of selected news stories served to flesh out and underpin the specific take on the payment ring controversy indicated in the page title and description.

The comments and likes below the posts amount to a second level of networked content analysis. Using this methodological vocabulary, one might say that comments and likes are used to 'code' the posts as they come along. These codes provide an ongoing evaluation of the content of the page, which is both quantitative (likes) and qualitative (comments). As a third level of networked content analysis, comments are themselves exposed to a similar coding in

the sense that they too can be liked and commented upon. The work done at this third level is in a sense a content analysis in the third degree: It codes the coding of another categorization and coding practice (the page owner's selection and commenting of links posted on the page). All these coding practices are happening simultaneously and continuously.

Facebook problematisations of the payment ring project

Let us take a closer look at what happened on one of the pages called "15 good reasons for opposing the payment ring". A bit more than 2000 people have liked the page. The '15 reasons' are stated in the page description, but they were also published as a post in the beginning of February 2012. This post became one of the most engaged-with on the page, with 39 'likes', 17 'shares', and dozens of comments. The post consisted of 15 selected links to web content outside Facebook, mostly newspaper stories, listed together as 'reasons to oppose the payment ring'. Each argument was summarized in a short sentence follow by the link itself.

The first of the 'good reasons' reads, "The payment ring harms those with a low income". This is a statement about what the future with a payment ring will be like: Those who are not well off will be most affected by the object. This economic argument is arguably especially significant since the payment ring was proposed by a center-left political alliance that would normally understand themselves as representing the interests of those with low incomes. The second and third reasons state that "motorists in Copenhagen already pay the highest parking fees in the world" and "Denmark has by far the most expensive taxies and levies in Europe". These statements focus on the present situation rather than imagining a payment ring future. They are highlighting the vulnerability of another group in relation to the payment ring project: This time it is not those with low incomes, but the Danish motorists, who are already persecuted by fees and taxes, a pressure to which the payment ring would supposedly only add. These two 'reasons' are followed by a fourth reason, which states, "The payment ring will make property prices decrease". This is another statement about future consequences of the payment ring project, focusing on how yet another group might be worse off in a payment ring future: The home owners will lose some of their fortune.

The list goes on, but these four claims suffice to show how the page owner seeks to establish multiple causal relationships describing how the payment ring project will harm specific groups. These causalities/casualties deploy various time-spaces. For the motorists, the emphasis is put on settling the *present* situation: What kind of existing environment does the payment ring have to make itself relevant in? The answer is a specific environment in which there is already a high level of taxes and fees on cars. The two other causalities, on the other hand, are deployed in order to also settle the *future*: What will a future with the payment ring be like? What are the consequences of the payment ring? Those with low incomes and those who own a house will be worse off.

This post in which '15 good reasons for opposing the payment ring' are collected and published is a particularly explicit example of the dominating practice on the Facebook pages, most notably on those positioned against the payment ring. A plurality of reasons for opposing the project are posted by the page owners, deploying causal relationships in order to show either that the payment ring project will harm certain groups and/or that the project will not have the intended consequences. In other words, the causal relationships in which the payment ring was conceived (greener traffic, less congestion, etc.) are replaced by alternative ones. Most often, these claims are substantiated with a link to a newspaper story, whose headline is sometimes allowed to speak for itself, and sometimes qualified by a sentence or two by the page owner. As such, the pages 'lift' certain stories about the payment ring project out of the stream of heterogeneous news in which they were first embedded and offers a curated presentation of multiple relationships that specifies the payment ring as an issue. The list of '15 good reasons' explicates this use of the Facebook pages by collecting 15 claims about the payment ring in one single post, in which each claim is followed by a link to a news story, which the page owner refers to as the 'source'.

By publicly linking the 'projected' object of the payment ring to a specific set of consequences, one might say that the Facebook pages contributes to the 'issuefication' of the payment ring. There is a demonstration of a certain set of causal relationships as 'facts' about the payment ring and its present and future environment. This demonstration of facts serves to show how certain entities are negatively implicated by the payment ring project, which means that a certain public is delineated together with the payment ring and its ramifications. As such, the

payment ring is not merely the center of controversy, but has become an issue in the sense of a problematized object that is co-articulated together with the public it implicates.

An important part of this dynamic is the change in the 'present and future environment' of the payment ring. The Facebook pages articulations do work to change the space-time in which the payment ring was proposed. The policy plan made by S-SF emphasized how the payment ring would yield a profit that would be reinvested in 'greener' traffic solutions. As such, there was a different temporal perspective in which the payment ring would not necessarily harm those with low incomes and cause property prices to drop. Moreover, the prime minister chose to discontinue the project only when she found that 'broad parts' of the population was against it, which implies a certain space of a general Danish public as the benchmark against which the payment ring was to be justified. On the Facebook pages, however, this general public space is replaced by an emphasis on specific publics qualified by their relationships with objects, such as motorists, home owners, low income earners, etc.

Witnessing payment ring problematisations

These observations about the posts made by page owners indicate how Facebook pages seem to deploy a topological perspective on the payment ring controversy that challenges both the linear temporality of political procedure in a delegative democracy and the notion of a general public space and a general public debate. The question then is how this has "empirical effect" more specifically (Marres 2011:511). How do Facebook pages do work as a topological device in relation to a sociotechnical controversy? The question here is not only how certain 'payment ring facts' are collected and demonstrated in order to change the time-space in which the payment ring can exist as an object, but also how Facebook pages facilitate demonstrations in another sense of the word (Barry 2001), as a protest that exhibits the existence of 'payment ring publics'. The notion of echo chambers arguably points exactly to this question: Under what conditions are publics organized?

As described above, my vantage point was those posts that provoked the most liked comments. The post with the '15 reasons' is one if these, generating a long list of comments of which several have been liked multiple times. The very first comment makes the simple remark: "Good arguments". Following the notion echo chamber one might say that this is a

typical example of how users on social networks experience a confirmation of their pre-existing views. But what to make of the fact that the comment is published and materialized as a comment, not just 'echoed' in the head of the user?

Following the notion of a demonstration of payment ring facts, one might say that a sort of witnessing is being performed. The Facebook user who made the 'good arguments' comment is made visible by her name and profile picture. In other words, there seems to be a real person with real concern for the payment ring who has read the 15 reasons and found them convincing. This relationship between an argument and a visible audience speaks to a certain way in which facts are established in the experimental science that is central to liberal democracies, namely through their demonstration in front of not only visible but also trustworthy witnesses (Shapin and Schaffer 1985). In the classic account, these standards for being a trustworthy witness would overlap with those required to be called a 'gentleman' in 17th century England, something which involved being a man with considerable property, among other things.

In the witnessing of the payment ring facts through the Facebook pages there also seems to be certain standards that witnesses have to live up to, but they seem to be more issue specific than the gentleman category. What counts on the pages positioned against the payment ring is to be a potential victim of the project, such as being a car-dependent citizen in the suburbs of Copenhagen (To quote one typical user comment: "I fear for my small business and all other small independent business owners…"). What discounts a witness, on the other hand, is not to have a car and thus not be implicated as a victim (To quote a user responding to somebody defending the payment ring: "let me guess, you only have a bike!"). It seems, then, that the demonstration and witnessing of 'payment ring facts' goes hand in hand with the demarcation and policing of the boundaries of the appropriate 'payment ring public' of witnesses to these facts.

These practices pertaining to the proper public witnessing of payment ring facts are visualized by Facebook as posts and comments that can be liked by other users. As such, there is a kind of witnessing of witnessing in play. The comment mentioned above stating that the 15 reasons were 'good arguments' was itself liked by five people. In the vocabulary of

networked content analysis, five people endorse this particular evaluation or 'coding' of the post. In the vocabulary of demonstrations, it is made clear that five people have witnessed the witnessing of the facts and found it convincing in some way. This witnessing of witnessing is underpinned by the fact that the users liking a post or a comment also appear with their full names. These are shown if one hovers the mouse over the aggregate number of likes below a post or a comment, 'demonstrating' a small public made up of 'real people'.

Facebook pages as 'demoes' of issue publics

On the Facebook pages, this establishing of facts and witnesses is never final and always ongoing: Some posts and comments that are liked, other are not, and there are comments that challenge or supplement the content of posts or previous comments. This is why these Facebook pages should probably not be seen as demonstrations in as strong a sense as scientific demonstrations or street demonstrations, but rather as 'demoes' in the third sense of the word demonstration, as something temporary and experimental, something under development. For example, the fourth comment below the post with '15 good reasons' states "The payment ring is asocial and only a money machine". The statement can be read as an interpretation, or indeed a summarizing labeling, of the post. If 15 reasons can be given why the payment ring is a bad idea, and it still seems that the decision-makers will follow through with the project, then it becomes possible to conclude that the payment ring can only be explained as a "money machine". In the eyes of the commenting user, this makes the payment ring fundamentally "asocial". Here, the demonstration and witnessing of payment ring facts on Facebook pages arguably has some kind of empirical effect.

The comment, which concludes that the payment ring is 'asocial' has been liked three times, the third highest number in the thread, which suggests that three people agreed with the interpretation to an extent where they chose to actively endorse it. The comment is also further commented on, however, namely by the page owner, who specifies in the following comment that the payment ring is perhaps not exactly a money machine, but "more like a money pit". This change between two derogative metaphors might seem insignificant at first, but it makes sense in so far as granting the payment ring the ability to generate an income means running the risk of acknowledging that there would be money to spend on 'greener

traffic' in Copenhagen, which was a key part of the reform package in which the payment ring was introduced (S-SF 2011).

The comment, then, shows how the page owner actively patrols the details of the issue, as the page understands it. However, it is not only the page owner that guides inquiry by patrolling subtle points that if left unguarded could cause a slide in the articulation of the payment ring object and its public. In another of the most liked comments to the same post, a user extends the analysis made by the page owner. First, the user restates argument number 10, which is that "the payment ring will force us out in public transportation, where the travel times are much longer". Then the user adds: "So the result will not be more hours worked".

This addition can be seen as crucial in so far as it deflates a last stronghold of the pro-payment ring side that the 15 reasons did not cover: The argument that people in Copenhagen waste thousands of work hours stuck in traffic every day. The political alliance promoting the payment ring retreated to this position towards the end of the controversy, when the environmental benefits of the payment ring were questioned (Andersen 2012). The more economic arguments were ready, because the center-left alliance never wanted to stand on 'green' grounds alone. They wanted first and foremost a reform package that would 'finance itself' and make Denmark more productive so that they could not be accused of spending money unwisely, an accusation often made about the left wing. The retreat from environmental causes, however, was not without cost. On one of the other anti-payment ring pages, the news story about the change in S-SF's justifications for the project is scolded in four user comments that ironically see the retreat as evidence that the left-wing parties are indeed only interested in devising new taxes for their own sake.

Facebook pages as a topological device

What to make of these dynamics? First a page owner collects 15 news stories and assembles them in a post as 'good reasons' to be against the payment ring project. Then a user makes a comment stating that these are 'good arguments'. Finally, several users like not only the post, but also the comment, while others again comment in ways that supplement the post. All these things are being displayed side by side, structured in at least three levels that all can be explored further and acted upon through a variety links. Organizing public reactions to

technological change in this way resembles what Lury (2012:247) has described as the "becoming topological" of culture. One of the cultural forms that Lury associates with this becoming is the fractal, among other relevant ones such as the list and the flow. What happens when 'the world is brought into the world' through fractal topologies like Facebook pages, where comments are being liked inside posts that are being liked inside pages that are themselves being liked? Following Lury, one of the main consequences of the becoming topological of culture is that change becomes the norm rather than the exception, and that change becomes immanent rather than "externally produced" (ibid.:249).

Here is the beginning of an answer, then, to Marres' question about how topological devices have consequences for the imaginaries of social and technological change. But it is not straightforward. In the case of the Facebook-inflected payment ring controversy, technological change arguably stayed in the drivers seat in the sense that the main activity focused on demonstrating consequences of a future payment ring infrastructure. At the same time, however, the public on which the technological projects was supposed to act was demonstrated not as a stable platform of action, but rather as an entity in a state of constant flux, which, on Facebook, is its normal state. One of the indications of this 'liveliness' is the proliferation of metaphors and analogies that disturb hierarchies of actors. While the government may be elected at one point in time through a casting of votes, on Facebook pages there is always the possibility that a modified photo or pointed comment will be liked and shared, with the empirical effect of disturbing the reference points with which technological change is imagined.

One of the most liked comments to another post on the '15 reasons' page turns things upside down in this way: "Can't we just postpone the temporary government? They are destroying the Danes' economy and Danish businesses." While the conventional view might be to see social media protest as ephemeral and temporary in comparison with a government whose task it is to think ahead, this comment suggests that it is the government that is only temporary and that the long term interests of the Danes are left for social media users to articulate. In another popular comment, a user suggests that the prime minister is building the payment ring in order to make space for herself on the road. Here, too, things are turned

on their head: It is not social media users that only have their private interests in mind, but rather the government ministers.

These comments are examples of a variety of comments that focus on denouncing the government as narrow-minded, egoistic, ignorant of facts, etc. Many of these comments are made in reaction to the news stories that are linked to. These stories are often given strong 'angles' as is the habit of journalists that seek to engage a large and nondescript audience. On the Facebook pages, however, the comments suggests that those gathered around a certain stance on the payment ring issue have a hard time finding any meaning in the content of the news stories. Several comments suggests, for example, that the payment ring only makes sense as a Soviet-like monument that the politicians of S-SF wish to leave for themselves to be remembered.

Against the deployment of payment ring facts that is foundational to the pages, the actions of the politicians seem unacceptable. What is being materialized through the Facebook interactions seems to be the product of a clash between two very different payment rings, situated in very different relations. While the notion of echo chambers might seem useful here, it does not capture the fact that people are 'shouting' at politicians more than they are reaffirming each other. Rather, people seem to be submitting to each other suggestions for how something that does not make sense can be made to make sense. There are several strategies here: Denouncing the government as ignorant, vainglorious, stubborn or egoistic, including recommendations and hopes for voting them out of office as soon as possible. Another strategy consists of proposing alternatives, both in terms of how to implement a road charge and in terms of how to combat congestion in other ways.

Indeed, some of the most popular comments expose the lack of meaning in the initiatives being described in the payment ring news stories. For example, one story posted is about the raising of parking fees in Copenhagen. This story is being posted in order to craft a link between the payment ring project and the car-related taxes and levies already in existence in Denmark. The three most liked comments points to how the higher parking fees are meaningless in different ways. One focuses on how it is unlikely that the income from the parking fees will actually be used on improving roads. Another focuses in a humorous way on

how it might be cheaper for him to drive around instead of parking while his wife goes shopping. A third focuses on how increased parking fees should be accompanied by plans to move work places out of the city to places "where we are allowed to park".

These comments and others suggest that more is going on than people 'echoing' each other's opinions (if that is possible at all). Rather, user comments seem to be experimental deployments of alternative causal relationships that tries to makes sense of the news stories Facebook users are exposed to. They could thus be seen as experimental issue publics in so far as they are issue formulations, offered up in a setting where they are placed side by side with other articulations, each of which has a counter of 'likes' next to it, demonstrating the existence of an engaged public in relation to the issue articulation, however small. Taken in this way, Facebook pages might be better understood as 'demoes' of issue publics.

Conclusion

Perhaps the Facebook pages examined here are neither echo chambers (displaying a lack of 'otherness') nor issue publics (displaying virtuous 'frame expansion' through inquiry), but rather a certain way of materializing the participating public in front of our eyes as an ever-changing entity. Perhaps this is where the empirical effect is: Facebook pages materialize demoes of issue publics, which are potential beginnings of inquiry. This inquiry, however, seems both to be made possible by and to be discontinued by the issue-oriented way of organizing on Facebook pages. Inquiry is made possible, because people offer each other meaningful ways in which they can see themselves as implicated in issues, which is a precondition for collective inquiry in the Deweyan conceptualization. Such inquiry is also made impossible, however, because any steps towards it seems to be already pointless since the payment ring project is cast as a total misunderstanding/perfect solution, that is, as a finished object. As such, the topology continues a division of labour between technological change and social change, where the object is seen to drive social change without being able to change itself. This particular distribution of agency might be associated with the influx of news stories that try exactly to talk to a general audience instead of talking to concerned people in a way that takes their concerns seriously (Latour 2013).

Following Marres' interpretation of Dewey, the problem of the public is not something to be solved, but something inherently problematic. Publics come into being as part of struggles to make objects relevant as issues. What I have examined here is related to this tension in so far as the payment ring project became issuefied in specific ways through Facebook pages. The understanding of democratic politics as marked by the rise and fall of issue publics involves a topological understanding of political processes that seems far removed from the linear tragedy outlined in the beginning of this paper. The general uptake of digital technologies such as social network sites is a fascinating topic since it seems to provide an avenue through which more topological imaginaries come to have empirical effect. Rather than just celebrating this potential, however, it is important to specify these empirical effects further, which is what I have tried to do in this paper with respect to Facebook pages as controversy spaces.

Can two controversies inform each other? In a sense, this paper has deployed one controversy in order to disturb another one, and vice versa. The notion of echo chambers show how social network sites are currently perceived as controversial ways of handling public issues. More specifically, their materialization of a more topological conception of the public is what makes them controversial. The rendering topological of another controversy, the payment ring one, through Facebook pages, however, indicated that perhaps the notion of echo chambers is not the most appropriate one. With respect to the payment ring controversy, the use of Facebook pages illustrated how different ways of thinking about public involvement in technological projects might be practices with digital media. Perhaps this dual disturbance of the relationships between technologies and publics is as productive as it is dizzying?

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